

Catawba County Animal Services Shelter Update



Presented to Board of Commissioners
September 7, 2010



Statistics

- The Animal Shelter is designed to hold 78 animals.
- Between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010, the shelter received a total of 8,379 animals.
 - This means that an average of 23 animals are received by Animal Services each day - 7 of these were by “owner surrender”
 - The shelter had an average daily census of 199 dogs and cats
 - An average of 2 animals were adopted each day
 - An average of 1 animal was returned to its owner each day
 - An average of 2 animals were transferred to rescue groups and the Humane Society
 - An average of 16 animals were euthanized each day or about 112 each week

Daily Cleaning

- The shelter is cleaned three times each day. The process involves a minimum of two staff members physically removing each dog from its kennel or cat from its cage and temporarily placing them in a portable cage. This is complicated by the fact that most of the dog kennels and cat cages house multiple animals.
- In the morning, the kennel or cage is disinfected with 5% bleach-water solution and rinsed with water. A squeegee is used to remove excess water and the area is allowed to dry before the animals are returned.

Daily Cleaning

- After lunch, animals are removed again and the areas are then cleaned with a antiviral / bactericidal such as Parvocide or Trifectant and rinsed with water. A squeegee is used to remove excess water and the area is allowed to dry before the animals are returned.
- At approximately 3:00 p.m., the animals are placed in the portable cages again and the kennel or cage is disinfected with bleach and rinsed with water. A squeegee is used to remove excess water and the area is allowed to dry before the animals are returned.

The Situation

- Several weeks ago, staff and the contract veterinarian noted an increasing number of cases of upper respiratory illness
 - Dogs exhibited coughing, nasal discharge, matted eyes, high fever, vomiting, diarrhea, poor appetite, lethargy and death
 - Cats exhibited high fever, vomiting, and rapid death
 - There is disease in both dogs and cats, but it is not the same disease.
 - In addition to tests for common shelter diseases that staff regularly conduct (i.e. Parvo, Feline leukemia, Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), heartworm), tests were sent to two animal virus labs through Intervet

The Situation

- Intervet was used because the company is evaluating a vaccine for canine influenza, and the illness at the shelter displayed signs similar to canine influenza
- Intervet helped establish the testing protocol and chose the labs where the samples were sent. The protocol was approved by the shelter's contract veterinarian.
- Staff took blood samples, nasal swabs and necropsy samples per the testing protocol
- Test results were negative for canine influenza and other viral illnesses
- Despite treatment, animals continued to get sick and die and the illness remains unidentified at this time
- Many of the animals were euthanized when they became sick or did not respond to the antibiotics that were given. The shelter will not allow a sick animal to suffer if it has remained in the shelter for the required length of time.

Animal Deaths Prior to Closing the Shelter

- Comparing the first 19 days of August 2010 to August 2009 reveals a 117% increase in deaths and a 134% increase in euthanasia due to illness.

	<u>August 1 - 19, 2010</u>			<u>August 1 - 19, 2009</u>		
	<u>Dog</u>	<u>Cat</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Dog</u>	<u>Cat</u>	<u>Total</u>
Died	6	7	13	3	3	6
Percentage that Died	2.7%	2.4%	2.5%	1.5%	1.0%	1.2%
Euthanized (illness)	76	67	143	23	38	61
Percentage that were Euthanized	33.9%	22.9%	27.7%	11.4%	12.3%	12.0%
Total that Died and were Euthanized	82	74	156	28	41	67
Percentage that Died and were Euthanized	36.6%	25.2%	30.2%	13.9%	13.3%	13.1%

Considerations

- Shelter medicine is different than clinical medicine in that we have to focus on the best thing for the largest numbers of animals rather than for one specific animal (average intake is 698 animals per month or 23 animals per day)
- Animals housed at the shelter were suffering from sickness and dying even while receiving treatment
- Some foster animals developed signs of the disease. Since these animals were housed in a foster home as opposed to the shelter, intensive treatment was provided and most did survive. In a shelter environment, it is not possible to provide intensive treatment for all of those that got sick.

Considerations

- Animals that were not showing signs were housed with and exposed to the sick animals due to the shelter not being designed to eliminate cross contamination or isolation
- The total animal population of Catawba County (companion animals, Humane Society, veterinarian practices, rescue groups, foster homes, etc...) needed to be protected from exposure especially since the illness has yet to be identified
- Animals that will be housed in the shelter in the future need to be protected from the illness as much as possible
(average intake is 698 animals / month or 23 animals / day)

Solutions Considered

- Monitor the situation and hope to see positive results from continued testing and treatment
 - Animals housed at the shelter would still be suffering from sickness, dying and being euthanized due to sickness
 - Additional animals would be exposed daily through intake (average intake is 698 animals per month or 23 animals per day)
 - Unknown if or when positive results would occur from treatment or if the virus would be identified
- This was determined not to be a feasible solution

Solutions Considered

- Stop adoptions (including foster homes and rescue groups) and hope to see positive results from continued testing and treatment
 - Animals housed at the shelter would still be suffering from sickness, dying and being euthanized due to sickness
 - Additional animals would be exposed daily through intake (average intake is 698 animals per month or 23 animals per day)
 - Results in further overcrowding which is a cause of disease in shelter animals
 - Protects the general animal population from an unknown illness that has proven very difficult to treat
- This was determined not to be a feasible solution

Solutions Considered

- Thoroughly clean and sanitize shelter including the HVAC system
 - Shelter must be empty because the animals housed there were suffering from sickness, dying and being euthanized due to sickness
 - Animals that were not showing signs were housed with and exposed to the sick animals and could re-contaminate the shelter since the shelter was not designed to provide isolation areas
 - Alternate site for incoming animals will be required
 - HVAC system must be cleaned and sanitized
- This was considered the only feasible solution due to unknown nature of illness and unknown source

Solution Chosen - Thoroughly clean and sanitize shelter including the HVAC system

- Shelter must be emptied because the animals housed there were suffering from sickness, dying and being euthanized due to sickness. Animals that were not showing signs were housed with and exposed to the sick animals and could re-contaminate the shelter.
 - Adopt, foster or rescue animals already in the shelter
 - Solution was not approved by contract Veterinarian or staff
 - Exposes the general animal population to an unknown illness that has proven very difficult to treat
 - Exposes veterinarian offices, animal hospitals, and other shelters (and the animals in them) to an unknown illness that has proven very difficult to treat
 - Decision – temporarily stop adoptions, foster and rescue programs

Solution Chosen - Thoroughly clean and sanitize shelter including the HVAC system

- Shelter must be emptied because the animals housed there were suffering from sickness, dying and being euthanized due to sickness. Animals that were not showing signs were housed with and exposed to the sick animals and could re-contaminate the shelter.
 - Establish a temporary shelter to house animals already in the shelter
 - Solution was not approved by contract veterinarian or staff
 - Shelter medicine is different than clinical medicine. It is not an animal hospital (that is not the purpose of the shelter).
 - Exposes sick animals to additional stress (movement to temporary site, portable enclosures, heat, etc...)
 - Due to unknown illness, unable to determine if animals can be successfully treated and / or decontaminated
 - Decision – sick and exposed animals to be euthanized

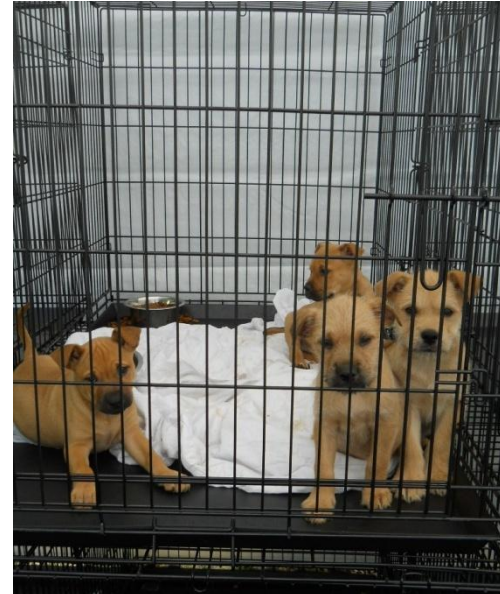
Actions Taken

- Adoptions were temporarily stopped on August 20, 2010 while staff determined how to deal with the animals housed at the shelter and reached out to State Department of Agriculture for assistance
- North Carolina Department of Agriculture was scheduled to meet with staff on Tuesday, August 24, 2010 at 8:00 am for an inspection and possibly some guidance
- State Inspector informed staff on the morning of August 24th that he would not come to the shelter and that we should do whatever our veterinarian instructed us to do
- Public notified and temporary shelter established on 8/24/10

Actions Taken

- Shelter was temporarily closed on 8/25/10
 - Intake limited by stopping owner surrender and allowing home confinement when possible
 - Animals humanely euthanized after appropriate hold time as required by state law and County Animal Control Ordinance
 - Disposable items removed from shelter and disposed of (i.e., blankets, towels, dog and cat food, noise buffers, mops, brushes, etc...)
 - Shelter and equipment thoroughly cleaned and sanitized
 - HVAC thoroughly cleaned and sanitized
 - Shelter and equipment thoroughly cleaned and sanitized multiple times

Temporary Shelter



Actions Taken

- Animals moved from temporary shelter to main shelter on 9/6/10
- Shelter reopens to the public on 9/7/10
 - Normal intake procedures resume
 - Adoptions resume as animals become available
- All actions taken were within the guidelines of the Animal Welfare Act and state regulations
- State inspector did inspect our facility on August 27, 2010 and stated that we were taking the correct actions to deal with the issues at the Shelter

August 26, 2010

Jay Blatche, Manager
Catawba County Animal Services
100 Southwest Blvd #C
Newton, NC 28658

Via e-mail: JBlatche@CatawbaCountyNC.gov

Dear Mr. Blatche,

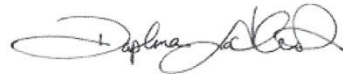
We wanted to take a moment to extend to you and your staff our sympathy and support during this difficult time. We are deeply sorry to hear that your animal shelter is being forced to euthanize the facility's population of 200 or so animals because of an unidentified illness. Many of our staff members have hands-on sheltering experience and are intimately familiar with the animal overpopulation and homelessness crisis and its tragic consequences.

PETA understands and supports the difficult decision made by Catawba County to temporarily close its shelter's doors to incoming animals, arrange for the set-up of an impermanent animal shelter at an alternate location, thoroughly sanitize and disinfect the facility, and euthanize animals determined to have been exposed to the deadly virus that has infected and killed many of the animal shelter's residents. As heartbreaking as this decision was, it is sure to minimize the risk that additional animals—in the shelter and in the community—could be exposed to the virus.

We know that the public does not always understand that no one hates the ugly reality of euthanasia more than the people who have the crushing task of holding the syringe. This must be a terribly difficult time for the Catawba County Animal Shelter; we wish that we could do more than lend you our support in writing.

Please feel free to contact me directly at 757-962-8338 if you have any questions or would like us to discuss our position on this sad situation with anyone. Thank you for everything that you and your staff do to prevent and alleviate animal suffering.

Very truly yours,



Daphna Nachminovitch
Vice President
Cruelty Investigations Department



PETA

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TO PROTECTING
THE RIGHTS OF ALL ANIMALS

Programs being offered to reduce the number of unwanted animals that are euthanized (average intake is 698 animals per month or 23 animals per day)

- Shelter hours (M-F 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. / Sat 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.)
- PetCo (typically the 3rd Saturday of each month from 10:00 am until 4:00 pm)
- Adopt-a-thons (various locations)
- Foster home program
- Transfer to rescue groups
- Transfer to Humane Society

Programs being offered to reduce the number of unwanted animals that are euthanized (average intake is 698 animals per month or 23 animals per day)

- Fostering an animal is taking that animal into your home and treating it like a member of the family. Fostered animals have a better chance of adoption and finding permanent placement.
- Catawba County Animal Services provides all the food, vaccines, flea prevention, and deworming.
- Since July 1, 2009, 233 animals have been fostered by the Humane Society and the thirteen foster homes that work with Animal Services (FY-09, 8 animals were fostered)

Programs being offered to reduce the number of unwanted animals that are euthanized (average intake is 698 animals per month or 23 animals per day)

- Microchipping – since July 1, 2009, 836 animals have received chips
- Rabies vaccination – all animals adopted, fostered, or transferred from the shelter are vaccinated. Additionally nine rabies clinics have been conducted throughout the county since July 1, 2009 which resulted in approximately 450 additional animals being vaccinated
- Rescue groups – the shelter has worked with 97 different rescue groups to transfer 801 animals since July 1, 2009. This is a significant increase (183%) from the 283 transfers completed the previous year.

The Future

- Solutions to the problem of pet overpopulation are interdependent and no single solution will resolve this issue
 - Expand spay and neuter opportunities – the idea of offering free spay and neuter clinics has been presented to this Board. We support spay and neuter programs, but the current Animal Shelter does not have room to perform the surgeries and we have been unsuccessful in finding veterinarians willing to give time and space for free.
 - Trap-Neuter-Return program – the idea of offering a Trap-Neuter-Return program for feral cats has been presented to this Board. Again, we support this program but the current Animal Shelter does not have room to perform the surgeries and we have been unsuccessful in finding veterinarians willing to give time and space for free. Additionally, we must have volunteers in the community willing to allow the feral colonies on their property.

The Future

- Solutions to the problem of pet overpopulation are interdependent and no single solution will resolve this issue
 - Should people who surrender their pets be held financially responsible through an owner surrender fee? (2,716 owner surrenders, which is 32.5% of our total intake, between 7/1/09 and 6/30/10)
 - Since the current shelter opened in 1985, the population of the county has grown significantly. The current facility does not include space in which to conduct education sessions, surgeries (spay and neuter), or isolation areas.
 - The Board of Commissioners has authorized the design of additional animal shelter space. When the design is complete, it will be brought to the Board for consideration. The design will incorporate the needed spaces to make the other programs mentioned earlier possible to implement.

You can help....

- Adopt a pet from the shelter
- Donate blankets, towels, canned dog and cat food to the shelter
- Become a foster family for a shelter animal
- Vaccinate your pets
- Spay or neuter your pets and encourage others to do the same
- Support humane societies and rescue groups so that they are able to take more animals from the shelter.
- All of these efforts will result in less unwanted pets coming to the shelter and will result in reduced euthanasia of unwanted animals